



# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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September 11 -- Admission Day 2004

## **Patriotic Grand Celebration Set For Columbia State Historic Park**

COLUMBIA – In 1850, when news reached California that the territory had been admitted as the 31st State, celebrations erupted throughout the towns of the gold rush. In the patriotic flair that was emblematic of the 19th century, towns celebrated with pomp, pageantry, brass bands, and flag waving.

On September 11th, 2004, 154 years later, the staff and volunteers of Columbia State Historic Park will celebrate Admission Day and present a grand and gala re-enactment of those original celebrations, complete with brass band, gun salute, patriotic speeches and the raising of an authentic, hand sewn replica of the 31-star flag.

The day will begin with a bang and a special triple-anvil firing at 10 a.m. The tradition of firing blacksmith's anvils in the air as a way to mark celebrations was carried west by early pioneers. Today, anvil firing is such an obscure ritual that it is practiced in only a few select spots. To "fire" the anvil, the base anvil (or shooter) is upended on the ground and the forge handling hole is packed with black powder. The top anvil (or flyer) is inverted and placed upon the shooter. The fuse is then lit and eight to 10 seconds later the powder will ignite, propelling the anvil into graceful flight, to land in a precisely calibrated spot.

From 1 until 4 p.m., park visitors will have the opportunity to participate in many gold-rush era activities presented by the park's volunteers. In addition to activities offered daily by the park concessionaires, such as riding the stagecoach, panning for gold, and enjoying a sarsaparilla in the many saloons and restaurants in town, children and adults alike may enjoy washing laundry (in tubs, the old way), being sworn-in at the old courthouse, visiting the old schoolhouse, exchanging gold with the express agent, watching miners work with historic equipment, or playing with old-fashioned toys on the street.

During Admission Day ceremonies, the volunteer militia of Columbia will raise a hand-sewn replica of an original 31-star flag. This 6-foot by 10-foot flag was created by Jim Miller of J.C. Miller Carpenter Shop in Columbia. This amazing, hand sewn flag was constructed of historic wool bunting, and was hand dyed using indigo and madder root. It was sewn with linen thread and features an enlarged 31st star, signifying California's admission as the 31st state. This beautiful flag will be on display throughout the afternoon at the Carpenter's Shop on Main Street.

At 12:30 p.m., visitors will enjoy a free concert presented by the Great Mother Lode Brass and Reed Band. The program will feature the patriotic works of John Philip Sousa, sure to pull the heartstrings of any patriot.

From noon until 3 p.m., newly restored brick buildings, together known as the Knapp Block, will be open for visitors to explore. Members of the restoration crew will be available to answer questions about the rehabilitation process. The rehabilitation of these buildings, which were built in 1854 to house several stores to serve the needs of the miners, is scheduled to be completed at the end of October.

This \$3.5 million dollar restoration project was funded out of the last voter-approved parks bond. Largely due to buildings like the Knapp Block, Columbia is recognized as a historic resource of state and national significance. Columbia is home to the largest single collection of existing gold rush-era structures, and was designated as a National Historic Landmark District in 1961.

In conjunction with the Knapp Open House, the Columbia Historical Preservation Society is sponsoring a 5th grade student poster contest. Winners will be announced at the open house, and posters will be displayed.

Later this year, California State Parks will re-install the Cavalier Museum, butcher shop and Chinese exhibits which have been housed in the Knapp Block since the 1940s. The California Parks Foundation is working with the park to raise \$350,000 needed to renovate the museum exhibits, which is expected to occur in the next few years.

Columbia is home to the largest collection of original gold-rush era brick buildings in existence. More than 20 park concessionaires – including a stagecoach, saloons, restaurants, dry goods stores, a mining supply, a candy store and a bookstore – recreate the businesses of the 1850s to preserve Columbia State Historic Park as a living town.

Columbia State Historic Park is located in downtown Columbia, approximately four miles north of Sonora, on Parrott's Ferry Road. Further information on Columbia State Historic Park may be obtained by visiting the California State Park website at [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov).

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